DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 097 598 CG 009 224

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TITLE Counselor Education Curricula - The Spring of Hope, the Winter of Despair.
PUB DATE Jan 74
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the EPDA Workshop (University of New Mexico, January 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Counseling Instructional Programs; *Counselor Characteristics; Counselors; *Curriculum Evaluation; Curriculum Planning; *Educational Objectives; *Program Improvement; Speeches; Theories; Training Objectives

ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author discusses the task of curriculum design in counselor education. He focuses on several component parts of this difficult task, including developing a theory of curriculum, defining counseling--its goals and outcomes, and explaining counselor characteristics. Only when these more general questions have been answered in a manner which reflects the commitment of an institution and a staff can the more typical steps of curriculum planning be undertaken. The specifications of courses, the allotting of credit hours, and the formulation of degree plans are mechanical and relatively unimportant aspects when compared to the fundamental concepts which undergird a program's reason for being. If a curriculum becomes a superficial arrangement of academic experiences providing little substance and preparing the individual to do little more than he would have been able to do without the program, then the problem most likely lies in failure to decide what kind of program to propose, and to develop outcomes with which all can be satisfied. (Author/PC)

ED 097598

COUNSELOR EDUCATION CURRICULA - THE SPRING OF HOPE, THE WINTER OF DESPAIR[1]

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INTRODUCTION

If we address ourselves to the task of curriculum design in Counselor Education, the simplest approach would be to continue the historical model of course content specification and credit hour manipulation. The fact that this effort has not served us well in the past should be a sufficient deterrant to prevent our limiting curricular study to this approach. Another popular, and somewhat more profitable, approach seeks the answer to more basic questions concerning academic programs. In Counselor Education, the most fundamental question, of course, would be one relating to the purpose of the program. Following, in somewhat sequential order, would be questions relating to how we prepare individuals for counseling. What is the process for which we are preparing individuals? What is the criteria for success for those who complete academic programs? How do we select those who are most likely to succeed in the program and in the profession?

Although we all read the same professional journals and share knowledge of the same research results, the state of the art, as it may be derived from answers to these questions, is by no means clear. While more specific observations and a few conclusions may be drawn, the picture is not altogether a positive one. A recent article in a professional journal began with this rather blunt statement: "Counselor Education programs lack clear direction and thus, are functionally inefficient." Despite the fact that elsewhere in that issue, a dozen articles pointed to innovative approaches in preparing professional counselors, the truth of the statement had an altogether too familiar ring and a nagging element of truth. In fact, both the critical comment and the plaudits are appropriate and well deserved. It has occurred to me that Dickens could have easily been reflecting on the current state of Counselor Education as he wrote the initial sentence in "A Talc of Two Cities".

> "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoc of belief, it was the epoc of increduality, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us."

With some degree of selectivity, it would be appropriate for both those in and out of the profession to evidence despair. On the other hand, however, there are glimpses of wisdom and flashes of light which foretell a time of greater creativity in Counselor Education and evidence hope that we may yet respond to the problems we face.

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COUNSELOR EDUCATION CURRICULA

Since so much of the content in Counselor Education revolves around curriculum matters, time spent in looking at how we prepare individuals for counseling and how successful we are in programs should be a periodic if not a continual process. Counselor Education curricula probably suffer the same malfunctions as do those in other academic areas. We are not immune from the greatest single curricula problem of proliferation. We have been called to task for requiring courses without the ability to clearly show that a need for the experience or content has been well established. Much of the emphasis in Counselor Education is on understanding concern for counselees, yet we may exhibit little interest in the personal and social needs of counselors in training. Somehow we may have lost sight of the changing career goals for which our preparation programs have been established. We may be guilty of misleading, if not outright falsification, of the purposes of our programs and the objectives which we plan to achieve. In the interest of administrative efficiency, if not record keeping, programs become prescriptive and rigid beyond the degree which could be accounted for by certification requirements. We may have responded disproportionately to fads and fashion, as well as gimmicks, by generalizing an interesting approach or a successful technique to the totality of a graduate program. We may have been unduly sensitive to accrediting agencies which are, in a very real sense, instrumentalities for enforcing professional wisdom; or certification agencies which are, in another sense, instrumentalities for enforcing legislative wisdom. We may have responded to the expanding frontiers of research and burgeoning scholarly developments by attempting to incorporate so much from so many disciplines that we create conditions of intellectual bankruptcy for graduate students. As a facet of an institution which is a creature of society, we may be so tuned to what society wants and expects, that we have lost our ability to respond to emerging needs. We can be so set on the stereotype of the counselor educator as one holding a doctoral degree and the professional counselor as one holding a masters degree, that we have lost flexibility for the consideration of alternative professional credentials. We may be so imbued with the propensity to emmulate other programs, particularly illustrious ones, that we are as likely to multiply our mistakes as to generalize progress. We may take the part for the whole or concentrate our attention on the modification of a selected aspect of a program at the expense of areas which are more susceptible to change and which might well make greater contributions in curricular improvement.

These and many other questions could quite logically be raised concerning the appropriateness of a given counselor education program and the need for continuing curricular review. It should be noted that no mention has been made of such prevalent and prodigious considerations newly arrived on the scene as counselor accountability and competency-based Counselor Education programs. Either of these would spawn an even longer list of considerations which must be taken into account as one reviews current

conditions in Counselor Education curricula.

If you start at the beginning, it would be helpful if one had a theory of curriculum on which to base evaluation and revision. It would be close to the truth to say that at the present, none exists. There are a number of individuals who write widely in the field and some are frequently quoted as having organized an approach to curricula which might serve as a basis for initial consideration. The most basic of these could serve the purpose of coordinating thinking about curricular content, but beyond an impetus in the initial stages, none could be viewed as particularly helpful in making specific decisions. Ways of thinking about the curriculum have been proposed by Alfred North Whitehead,who sees a cyclic and building block quality, incorporating a sequence which eliminates the need for repetition either within or between courses. John Henry Newman de-emphasizes both subject matter content and curricular arrangement, suggesting that the true curriculum is the living and working together which results from personal and social interaction of students. Ralph W. Tyler sees the need for a specific set of objectives based on the needs of society, which are then converted into behavior descriptions for the individual from which learning experiences are derived. Paul Dressel proposes a set of conserving limiting principles which specify the essential work to be taken in common by all students and beyond which individual faculty members will decide what should be appropriate for students to experience and learn. Earl McGrath suggests outlining the agreed upon, desirable, commonly accepted outcomes of a curricular area which are then reduced to a limited curriculum which may be easily changed to meet the needs of students and developing professional conditions. Robert Henle attempts the gargantuan task of utilizing a humanistic approach to establish the concrete reality of course structure through the inclusion in the curriculum of meanings and experiences which will have the greatest possible impact on students nd produce personal insights which will provide both a theory of knowledge and practical skills. Philip Phenix proposes that curriculum building consists of selecting from available knowledge known to be important in a professional area, those things which possess three essential dimensions: inner life experiences, knowledge and principles, and expression and communication. And finally, Harold Taylor would approach curriculum development from the standpoint that there is no finite body of information in an academic area, but rather knowledge emerges and evolves as individuals seek to accomodate their conception of reality and their sense of purpose. The logical extension of which would mean that there would be no curriculum at all.

The problem with curriculum building based on curriculum theory is that it leaves one with the hard questions. How does one decide what to eliminate from an existing curriculum? When do you add an important element to a curriculum? Which is more important; the interests of individual faculty, the potential enrollment, availability of instructional materials, felt need on the part of students, interests of employers,

demands of the graduate school, needs for innovation, or concern for stability and historical relevance? Again, the overwhelming concerns deriving from areas such as; academic freedom, accrediting and certification agencies, professorial priviledge, facilities and resources, and the reality of institutional and community politics have yet to be considered. Paramount to the whole problem also is the dynamic element of the central administration which may be demanding change, exercising educational leadership, generating new curricular missions and directions, emphasizing cost accounting, responding to legislative accountability, or establishing a hierarchical list of curricular elements which will be responded to in terms of physical and personal encouragement and support. We have not yet accounted for a major influencing element in terms of state, federal, and private aid programs. Our past posture of responding to what was popular and funded may have been drastically simplified with the cancellation or questionable future of practically all categorical aid programs.

Are we being over critical? Have only the limiting aspects been enumerated? Have our seasons of darkness and winters of despair been singled out for enumeration? Quite possibly so. However, it is through an evaluation of things which need attention that the roles and tasks of Counselor Education programs can become more productive and meaningful. Signs of hope are often seen outlined most vividly when contrasted with elements of programs which need evaluation if not revision. Probably it would be difficult to enumerate all of the problems now facing Counselor Education programs. On the other hand, it would be impossible to list all of the positive factors which have accrued to the professional area in it's brief and recent history. From what has been said, it should appear equally difficult to specify either the changes which should be brought about or the manner in which change should be pursued. An alternate approach, which should serve the purpose equally well on this occasion, is to draw conclusions from available information concerning the effectiveness of existing curricula with implications for change as they may logically occur. Finally, hopefully to cast these elements into a broad consideration on both human and mission-oriented dimensions as they relate to Counselor Education curricula.

COUNSELING: DEFINITION, GOALS, OUTCOMES

While it is not necessary to reach an agreement on a definition of counseling and in fact, we might be unable to do so,some general guidelines as to what we are preparing people to do seems appropriate. Probably the most acceptable definition would be one which defines counseling as a relationship between a professionally trained person and an individual or a group of individuals involving verbal interaction directed toward effecting change in the individual seeking help with a problem. A less cumbersome, but perhaps less accepted definition, would be that counseling is the means whereby a person teaches himself about himself through a counselor. Under the latter definition

the adequacy or the success of counseling depends simply upon the degree to which behavior is modified and the degree to which an individual learns about himself or his world. It may be immediately seen that one might question the inclusion of the verbal interaction component in the definition of counseling since some behavior change approaches minimize and even exclude this emphasis. A third type of definition would simply state that counseling is helping every individual to take charge of his own life through making decisions and altering his behavior.

Although the specification of the goals of counseling is as difficult as a definition, two broad classification of goals tend to be utilized. Cognitivists tend to include such things as self acceptance, self understanding, insight, self actualization, self enhancement, adjustment, maturity, and independence. Behaviorists tend to list solution of specific problems, decision making, acceptance of responsibility, and development of specific behaviors. Behaviorists see the cognitivists' goals as vague and unmeasurable, whereas cognitivists view the behaviorists' goals as trivial, partial and limited.

The outcomes of counseling may be no different than the objectives and goals of counseling, if the term is utilized in a prescriptive manner. However, counseling outcomes are more likely to be viewed as research variables which describe current or historical criteria. Counseling success is quite obviously related to desirable outcomes, which, in turn, are based upon the objectives of counseling. The criteria used to evaluate counseling outcomes, again, will vary depending upon the overall view of the counseling process. The cognitive view of counseling will tend to utilize more internal criteria and factors unique to the individual, while behavioral approaches are more likely to insist upon external objectively measured criteria which places normative values along a multi-dimensional scale. The cognitivist may utilize a study such as a frequency of positive self reference or the congruence between one's real self and ideal self as an indication of outcome; while the behaviorist may observe that these criteria are impossible to measure, too broad to be accepted as criteria, and conclude that positive views of the self are at best, value judgements. Behaviorally, one may be more interested in outcomes such as frequency of social interaction or concrete evidence that one has learned and applied steps in the decision making process.

The outcomes of counseling, however, regardless of the specified goals, technique, or approach, share some common factors.

1. Regardless of the group served or the approach used, only a small portion of those whom we try to help would be judged as evidencing desirable outcomes.

2. We tend to list the same types of outcomes for all individuals and claim to help all people with all kinds of problems.
3. Every approach can document success in helping some people and each can show it has succeeded where others have failed.
4. When the outcomes are positive, those who are helped share the same characteristics in that they have good ego strength, present identifiable environmental stress, have the ability to express their feelings and identify their problems, relate well to others, and are motivated to receive help.
5. Successful outcomes depend upon establishing a relationship either in a group or between two individuals in which each has the confidence that the outcome will be positive.
6. Successful outcomes depend on the ability to explain the cause of distress, specify desirable goals, and prescribe ways of achieving them. Regardless of the approach, the ability to name, clarify and explain seems to be, in itself, helpful and contributing to a positive outcome.
7. Outcomes are based on a rationale of how an individual can best be helped, and involve, by some definition, active participation.
8. Successful outcomes depend on helper characteristics and the ability to communicate confidence and even a zeal to help others.
9. Individuals seeking help may, in effect, present a common problem in that they have failed to meet their own expectations or those of others, feel powerless to change the situation or themselves, worry about their lack of control, feel restricted and constricted, cling to past habits and behavior, and are reluctant to make long-range plans or attempt changes.

Successful outcomes, therefore, simply depend upon changing present conditions. The cognitivist helper will try to enter the individual's world, countering his sense of alienation and meaninglessness. Diagnosis is unimportant and there will be no special attempt to relieve symptoms. The behavioristic helper will aim at treating specific conditions or symptoms in order to overcome the symptoms and restore morale. The individual will be urged to take effective action and to assume responsibility for his behavior by developing a list of alternative goals, doing something differently, and generalizing the decision making process and behavior changes to new situations.

Studies dating from the early 1950's to the present indicate a relatively poor success ratio in counseling situations. Regardless of the technique utilized, treatment facilities, or counseling approach, only one-fourth to one-half of the individuals beginning a counseling relationship persist beyond the first few counseling sessions. There seems to be little difference between the success ratio in educational, vocational, or personal counseling areas. Since this does not include those individuals who become involved in counseling only to the extent of initiating counseling, and that a direct relationship has been found between the number of times an individual is seen in counseling and the evaluation of a successful outcome, our success ratio in working with counseless is quite likely to be less than 25%.

COUNSELOR CHARACTERISTICS

A possible explanation of the lack of successful outcomes in counseling may well be related to the fact that counselors tend to be successful with individuals to whom they may easily relate and who resemble them as persons. This means, for example, that since counselors are generally Anglo, middle-class, achievement-oriented, verbal, social, and outgoing, they tend to be successful with the individual who is motivated toward self understanding, self improvement, communicative, oriented to feeling tones, has achievement needs, and is less likely to exhibit anti-social or serious adjustment problems. In effect, typical counselors may be selecting typical counselees from those who have some personal resources for improved understanding and adjustment and with whom they can most easily utilize their counseling skills.

This may well explain the lack of counseling success with the greater percentage of individuals who are in need of counseling by virture of self referral or referral by others. It may also be the most valid explanation of the difficulty counseling has experienced in dealing with the wide variations in social-cultural background, racial and ethnic groupings, and social and behavioral problems which are predominant factors in counseling relationships. Surveys have indicated that the counseling approaches typically used by counselors involve verbal interaction as the major vehicle, self exploration as the ultimate goal, self improvement as the essential method, and self motivation as the necessary ingredient for counseling success. Since none of these factors are likely to exist in working with the more serious social and behavioral problems, particularly those from the disadvantaged cultures, the hope for counseling success is automatically minimized. Since surveys have shown that counselors generally contribute their lack of success with about one-third to one-half of their clients as due to the lack of client motivation, and further, since at least one-half of their clients will be sufficiently different from the counselor as a person or fail to evidence characteristics which are highly related to counseling success, and finally, since few will remain for sufficient counseling experience (six to nine sessions) typically seen as the minimum essential for successful counseling outcome, the fact that we achieve moderate success

with even one-fourth of the client population may be viewed as a relatively successful outcome in itself. At this point one is hesitant to inject the element of spontaneous remission rate, which would further cloud the issue and question the credance of the meager counseling success percentages we now report.

IMPLICATIONS

1. The assumption that clients improve, or at least remain the same, is not tenable.
2. Directness, intervention, and perhaps manipulation may be more beneficial than traditional counseling with some social or behavioral problems.
3. The effectiveness of activeness or counselor technique relates more to client problem areas and personal factors than to the counselor factors.
4. Counseling success bears a higher relationship to resources of the client than to resources of the counselor.
5. The most accurate predictor of counseling success is the quality of client functioning at the onset of counseling.
6. Unknown conditions prior to counseling may contribute more to counseling success than the conditions of counseling.
7. The passage of time rather than the number of counseling interviews or the technique employed may well be the relevant dimension.
8. Counseling success tends to be judged with the criteria of client and/or counselor evaluation rather than by actual changes of behavior in situations other than the counseling setting.

In view of the problems and difficulties, the connection between counseling outcomes and Counselor Education preparation programs does not always seem to bear the most direct relationship. The difficulty encountered in translating these facts into a curricular system may appear to be insurmountable. Those who define guidance and counseling in a very narrow conceptual framework and limit theory, techniques, and counseling outcomes to a few well-defined behaviors may find the going somewhat easier, but I doubt it. The prospects of developing a broad conception which could encompass the totality of Counselor Education programs seems doubtful at best. Carkhuff has protested that eclectic practioners and theorists are escapists who do not stand for anything and whose stance is too un-systematic to research meaningfully, although he holds out hope that such a system can be developed. At this point, I am not sure that

it matters very much. It appears to be more logical and professionally defensible to make some basic decisions regarding who we are and what we are about and proceed to do the best professional job possible within the framework of the decisions which have been made and the objectives which have been agreed upon. Some of the most basic of these would include:

1. Which one or ones of the four clearly identifiable academic levels of counselors will be prepared and what, if any, curricular relationships will exist between them?
2. To what extent will certification and accrediting standards be implemented or to what degree will they influence curricular arrangements at each of the preparation levels?
3. How do you deal with the issue of recruiting and admission to existing and planned preparation programs?
4. How will advisement and supervision of students be organized and administered?
5. How do you plan to systematically assess individual growth and competency during and as a result of the preparation program?
6. To what extent do you plan to capitalize on the availability of new resources and techniques and bring these resources to bear on the preparation program?
7. How can you orientate individuals in providing services in new ways and in new settings in which productive counseling can occur.
8. How can you broaden the concept of what can be learned, when things can be learned, and where learning can occur to promote receptivity to cross generational communities, multi-ethnic settings, and the significance of community life and traditions?
9. To what extent will flexibility be allowed a student in personalizing his professional preparation and degree requirements?
10. Can the program or programs be justified in terms of professional demand and career achievement of students?
11. Are resources; financial, staff, and facility, adequate and appropriate for the professional preparation of counselors?
12. Is there balance between dedication and flexibility of the staff to insure an adequate response to change in both the curricular and personal aspects of programs.

CONCLUSION

It is only when these more general questions have been answered in a manner which reflects the commitment of an institution and a staff that the more typical steps of curricular planning can be undertaken. The specification of courses, the allotting of credit hours, and the formulation of degree plans become rather mechanical and relatively unimportant aspects as compared to the fundamental concepts which undergird a program's reason for being. If it results in a superficial arrangement of academic experiences, which in turn provide little substance and prepare the individual to do little more than he would have been able to do otherwise, the problem is most likely to lie in our failure to decide what kind of programs we propose and the outcomes with which we will be satisfied. Whether our times will continue to be mixed, or if they will move into the light or shadows of darkness, will depend upon the decisions made in these fundamental areas. If the outcomes are not positive, the assessment of blame will be a rather easy matter. In the words of Ceasar, "the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves". In this conclusion, we may find both the ultimate question and the ultimate answer.